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ABSTRACT

In recent years, public dissatisfaction with education has led educators, citizens, and policymakers to consider creating a national system of standards and assessments. This dissatisfaction resulted in movement to establish national standards and assessments in U.S. education. These standards are designed to raise the achievement levels of all students. Chapter 1 examines the idea of standards, why they are important in most walks of life, and what they mean in education. It also considers the cases for and against national education standards. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the history of standards and assessments in U.S. education. The third chapter analyzes various indicators of educational achievement, including student performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, international assessments, and course-taking patterns. Chapter 4 explores the major ideas of scholars and policymakers that shaped the national discussion of standards and assessments. The politics of standard setting at the national and state levels is examined in the fifth chapter. It reviews the passage of the Goals 2000 legislation in Washington, D.C., and the controversies over standards occurring in the states. Recommendations are offered in chapter 6 regarding the role of the states, institutions of higher education, and business. A system of standards and assessments will not remedy all the problems with which U.S. education is faced; however, it will improve the areas of teaching and learning. Four tables, five figures, and chapter footnotes are included. The appendix contains the National Education Goals. (LMI)

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